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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 000687

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [EDEV](#) [PINR](#) [PBTS](#) [TI](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: PRC-Tajikistan: China Displacing Russia, No
Outstanding Border Issues Remain, Says Tajikistan
Embassy (C-RE8-00054)

Classified by Political Minister Counselor Aubrey
Carlson. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶11. (C) Summary: According to a diplomat at the Tajikistan Embassy, Tajikistan increasingly tilts toward China, which it regards as the best hope in the region for a patron, supplanting Russia's historical role. PRC-funded economic development projects (primarily infrastructure investment) further commercial links and win over ordinary citizens, who suffer from an energy crisis and chronic underdevelopment. Chinese "soft power" and security-related training for Tajikistan officials also contribute to better ties. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) fails to provide a framework for increasing regional economic activity, given its continuing focus on political and security matters. The SCO's lack of economic focus disappoints Tajikistan and contrasts with growing bilateral economic ties with China. A 2002 agreement with China ending the border dispute was comprehensive, and no outstanding border issues remain, the diplomat claimed. End Summary.

Russia Losing Influence to China

¶12. (C) Tajikistan Embassy Political Minister Counselor Likoev Mahmadali told PolOff February 15 that in the last few years China has shown a strong and growing interest in fostering Tajikistan's economic development, in contrast to Russia's almost exclusive focus on security in relations with the smaller countries of Central Asia. Mahmadali indicated Russia's approach appears self-serving to many in Tajikistan, who believe Russia takes for granted its historical ties with the country. China's focus on highly visible economic activity with smaller neighbors addresses the problems that ordinary Tajikistan citizens face. The Chinese strategy, Mahmadali said, has effectively ensured cooperation on security and increased China's long-term influence among ordinary citizens and leaders.

Infrastructure Investment

¶13. (C) Chinese infrastructure development projects in Tajikistan include highways, hydroelectric power and electricity transmission lines, for which private investment plays an important part. Mahmadali indicated that because this private investment is the result of official prodding from Beijing, Tajikistan regards it as a form of foreign assistance. In addition to upgrading Tajikistan's domestic power transmission system, Chinese investors plan a project

to connect the Tajikistan power grid to Afghanistan, according to Mahmadali. Also, China completed a road in 2006 that connects Dushanbe to Xinjiang through the Pamir Mountains, which not only develops the economy but facilitates other Chinese projects in Tajikistan.

"Soft Power" and Humanitarian Assistance

14. (C) China's global "soft power" enterprise is manifested in Tajikistan through growing cultural and educational programs, law enforcement cooperation and scientific exchanges, Mahmadali said. China provided a USD 4-million grant to the Tajikistan counter-narcotics agency in Dushanbe, and has brought law enforcement officials to Beijing for counter-terrorism training. China also offered humanitarian aid during Tajikistan's recent energy crisis, specifically by repairing roads between the two countries, a pledge made despite China's own snowstorm crisis. China so far has not made good on this pledge, Mahmadali said, lauding U.S. assistance as the first on the scene and well-targeted to meet the needs of victims. He stated that one reason for the slow Chinese response is that Chinese assistance to Tajikistan is generally long-term in nature and not geared toward emergency response.

SCO Focus All Political/Security

15. (C) Mahmadali said that Tajikistan's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is essential to its efforts to cultivate relations with

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16. (C) Mahmadali said that PRC-Tajikistan relations improved after the 2002 agreement to settle a long-standing territorial dispute. He volunteered that the agreement has been successfully implemented and no outstanding territorial claims remain on either side.

Bio Note

17. (C) Mahmadali is an experienced diplomat but a newcomer to China. He spent his early career in the Soviet Foreign Ministry as an Arabist, including a tour at the Soviet embassy in Baghdad, where he claims to have interpreted for visiting Soviet officials in their meetings with Saddam Hussein. His current tour was preceded by an assignment as a Political Counselor at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Secretariat in Beijing.

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